Course Description

Welcome to Urban Worlds!

In this course, we will trace the contours of our 21st urban century, and how it is shaped in different regions of the world. From gigantic mega-cities to urbanizing villages, from poor slums to privileged enclaves, from the global North to the global South - an ever-increasing majority of the planet is residing in urban settlements. We will see how urbanization took place in the past, and how it is continuing in a much more dramatic way today. We will study how cities have always been part of a world system, and how they are running the global economy today. We will understand some of the economic advantages
of cities and their amazing capacity to generate wealth, as well as the social challenges they create, through urban poverty, inequality and exclusion. We will dig deep into the role of cities in the current processes of climate change, and understand how they are at once part of the problem and our best shot at a solution to our environmental crisis. And we will conclude by looking at some of the political issues at stake in our cities, and how we can govern and manage them in more technologically smart ways, but also more socially just ways. Overall, this course is an invitation for you to become “urbanists”, and to better understand the complex human, economic, social, political and environmental dimensions of cities around the world.

Course Goals

- Understanding key urbanization trends in the 21st century
- Placing urbanization and cities in a historical context
- Relating cities to utopian thought and modern planning
- Understanding the role of cities in the world system and the global economy
- Identifying the key economic advantages of urban areas, such as agglomeration economies
- Specifying the key social-economic challenges of urban areas, such as poverty and inequality
- Understanding informal urbanization and the formation of slums
- Recognizing the role of cities in climate change processes
- Evaluating the range of urban sustainability solutions
- Understanding key urban governance issues, including “smart cities” and “the just city”
- Framing the “right to the city” as a key perspective for the New Urban Agenda

Grading

- **9 Quizzes: 18 points**
- **Assignment 1 – Urbanization and Globalization: 24 points**
  - Due by end of Week 4
- **Assignment 2 – Economic and Social Dimensions: 24 points**
  - Due by end of Week 8
- **Assignment 3 – Environmental and Political Dimensions: 24 points**
  - Due by end of Week 12
- **Assignment 4 – Visual Essay: 10 points**
  - 5 bonus points for best photos uploaded to our Facebook group
  - Due by end of Week 12

Lecturer Office Hours

By email appointment
Tutor Office Hours
By email appointment

Reading List
The course does not have mandatory readings. Additional reading materials are available on the course website.